FREE
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EVENTS LISTINGS FOR ACTIVISTS

Cops Cite Alleged Weapons Cache:

BC Squats Squashed

One of 27 squatters is arrested by a Vancouver cop.

After nine months of successful occupation, five Vancouver squats were forcibly evicted by police in a military-style operation on November 27.

After eighty police sealed off the neighbourhood and set up snipers, the "ERT" (Emergency Response Task Force--a Vancouver version of Ontario's Emergency Task Force) moved in to finish the job. Although the squatters left peacefully, all 27 were arrested and 17 people were charged with obstruction of justice and mischief.

The official reasongiven for the use of "SWAT style" tactics and the large number of police was a rumour that a cache of weapons was hidden in the squats, an allegation which squatters deny and police have yet to prove. The squatters feel the excessive force was used to deter other people from attempting direct action solutions to the housing crisis. Prior to the raids, the houses had served both as a home for the squatters and as a symbol of resistance to homelessness and gentrification. All 27 squatters and supporters have been released on their own recognizance.

This story gives a local point of reference for our series on the squatting movement in crisis. See page two.

Norcen Adds Fuel to the Fire as

Tensions Flare in Lubicon Territory

Faced with logging operations on their unceded lands in northern Alberta, the 500-member Lubicon Lake Cree Nation has warned logging and oil companies that their operations are subject to removal if they don't get operating permits from the Lubicons and pay them royalties. Two logging operations, Buchanan Lumber and Brewster Construction, ignored these conditions and went ahead. On November 24, Buchanan's logging equipment and trailers were firebombed and tires were slashed.

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Barricades in Berlin

First in a Series on the Squatting Movement Under Fire

"Squatting" has always been one way to solve the housing crisis for homeless people. Unoccupied houses, apartments, or land are occupied by those who need them as an alternative to life on the streets. Squatting challenges the notion of private property, a notion which leaves buildings empty while people sleep on the streets. However squatting also goes beyond being merely a band-aid on a crisis created by land speculation and private ownership, it can also a be a part of creating real alternatives to capitalist society. Not only is the act of squatting an act of self-determination, a direct action in itself, the communities created by squatters can often be the catalyst for changing social relations between the participants, as people arrange their own lives together and distribute power equally. They can also be centres for political activity. Perhaps that's the main reason why these "liberated zones" come under such fierce attack by police. Defending squats is not a tea-party, as the following article will show — but it is often the only option for people who have nowhere else to go.

Ecomedia will be presenting a series of articles on different squats under attack: here in Canada, in Berlin, and in New York.

Until recent police action succeeded in evicting the squatted houses of the Mainzerstrasse in East Berlin, the area served as a vibrant centre for the left in the city. Twelve buildings, including gay and lesbian houses, a bookstore, and a coffee house had been squatted by over 100 people for more than six months, but a November 14th police attack forced the squatters out.

Prior to the attacks, a city-wide squatters plenary, including representatives from over 130 squats in East Berlin, was trying to negotiate with the city government. In a city with tens-of-thousands of homeless, 25,000 apartments vacant in East Berlin alone coupled with soaring rents, squatting has become the number one solution for shelter. No evictions were expected until after the civic elections on December 2. The element of surprise gave [olice the upper hand when, on November 12, they raided three long-term squats and met little resistance.

Once word of the attack spread, a demonstration erupted, and traffic barricades were erected. Police drove through the Mainzerstrasse firing CS gas and water blasts into squats and regular tenants' buildings alike as a provocation. Once the police retreated, over a thousand supporters poured into the area and prepared serious defences.

Some politicians, neighbours and others supporting the squatters tried to negotiate a solution with the governing coalition, while the Social Democrats, the police and West Berlin's mayor initiated a media campaign to criminalize the squatters.

In the early morning of November 14, over 4000 police and "anti-terror units" sealed off the neighbourhood and fired off more CS gas (a chemical weapon which causes asthma attacks, vomiting, etc), rubber bullets, shock grenades and live ammunition. Squatters held out for 3 hours, but in the end over 400 were arrested, 2 shot and injured by "stray bullets" and one woman remains in hospital from police beatings.

Support came immediately from a 15,000-strong demonstration in East Berlin, attacks on banks, department stores and police stations across Germany, occupations and a firebombing of German embassies in other European countries. The Alternative List left the governing coalition they had made with the Social Democrats in protest.

Some believe the Social Democrats are looking for the law-and-order ticket in the upcoming elections and also that they see any example of self-determination as a threat to the "New Greater Germany". The opposition has to be either pacified or crushed, especially in the designated capital.

The police are also known to be following guidelines set by the TREVI Commission ("Terrorism, Radicalism, Extremism, Violence International") which functions as the West European counterinsurgency planning committee, and whose guidelines state that all squats in Western Europe must be empty by 1992 — the year of European unification.

The Mainzerstrasse has been sealed off by police while construction crews demolish the houses.

(condensed from a longer report by Heike Klefner, West Berlin)

Political Prisoners This Week...

When Vancouver cops dress in full military gear to attack a handful of squatters, it becomes obvious that our society is waging war against its own poor. In this case, the squatters were jailed for the crime of trying to keep warm. Some other hostages in the war are listed below.

Animal Liberation Front

Three animal rights activists in California were charged with a 1986 break-in at the University of Oregon which freed 150 live animals being used in research labs (they were given to safe homes.) The men arrested deny that they were in Oregon at the time of the break-in, but the state has demanded huge bail sums and plans to try them. They were implicated by a womyn activist who was jailed and denied vital medication until she "made a statement."

Mohawk Warrior Society

Numerous Mohawks have been arrested on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border in the wake of the Oka resistance. Among them is Kakwirakeron, grandfather, Mohawk patriot and Warrior Society spokesperson, currently serving two concurrent ten-month sentences in a medium-security prison in Virginia, far from his home in Akwesasne, for "national security reasons." Kakwirakeron is a political prisoner, arrested for resisting an armed invasion of his traditional homeland.

Irish Republican Army

Joseph Doherty, an Irish Republican Army volunteer, has not been convicted of any crime, but has been held on a preventative detention order in a U.S. jail for seven years while seeking political asylum. Doherty was again denied bail in early November, on the speculation that he might flee if he was granted bail. Although eight State Department attempts to deport him have been rejected by U.S. courts and a congressional resolution calling for his release now has more than 130 signatories, (including both liberals and conservatives) authorities insist on keeping him in prison.

Norcen Adds Fuel to Fire

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No one has yet laid claim to the action; Lubicon chief Bernard Ominayak would only say "They've been warned several times..." The attack has other companies worried, especially Brewster. A subsidiary of Daishowa, the Japanese multinational, Brewster is logging in the area despite an agreement between the Nation and Daishowa not to lcommence until a settlement of their land claim has been reached.

Meanwhile Norcen Energy Resources, who voluntarily shut down their oil wells on Lubicon lands last year after refusing to obtain Lubicon leases, announced November 30 that they would re-open their wells over the next two weeks. Norcen claims that keeping the wells shut is "not helping anyone".

Buchanan and Norcen claim 'disinterested third party' status; bystanders caught in a battle between the Lubicons and the government. The Nation can't wait for a political solution while 'disinterested third parties' tear up their land base. If companies were truly interested in a settlement, they would apply for operating leases and permits from the Nation; since they aren't, they can expect all further theft of Lubicon resources to be disrupted.

Hunger Strike Called Off

An Irish Republican prisoner, Dessie Ellis, decided to end his hunger strike on Thursday, November 15, a day after being extradited to Britain from Ireland. It was this extradition that Ellis was trying to prevent by hungerstriking, and called off the strike because he doesn't want to die off Irish soil.

Ellis was extradited to face charges of conspiring with others to cause explosions. An IRA arms cache discovered in 1983 in Britain forms the basis of the case against him. Since Ellis had been in custody for the previous two years, it is illogical that he could be implicated with the IRA cache.

The British media has already begun its trial by media, and Ellis will now have to explain his Republican history to the British courts, notorious for their convictions of the innocent Birmingham 6 and Winchester 3.

MEDIA WATCH

LIBERAL WAFFLING DETRIMENTAL

Despite the new-found popularity of green politics, the environment continues to deteriorate because a reduction in pollution from the most flagrantly abusing industries has been more than offset by the aggregate number of industries, activities and people that pollute and deplete resources. This was the main finding of a one-year study by the recipient of a Toronto Star grant, reported in the Star 25-11-90 pA1. He reports that our energy use per capita has doubled since 1965, that depletion of tree and fish stocks is escalating, that our soil is being exhausted by increased pesticide and fertilizer use etc. Quite rightly, he blames this on our commitment to increasing production each year.

Unfortunately, his analysis (like that of Star columnist David Suzuki) stops at this point. To carry it any further, he would have to violate the sponsoring Atkinson Fund's goal of furthering the Star's "tradition for liberal journalism." Liberal journalists are not prepared to ask whether saving the environment is compatible with maintaining capitalism. If they did, the liberal Star would kick them out on their liberal butts.

Capitalism demands continued growth; any industry which does not constantly expand and absorb other industries is in danger of itself being absorbed. Like any other form of cancer, capitalism must be removed (however painful the surgery) or it will kill the patient (our planet). Only by adopting ethics that are the direct antithesis of capitalism can we replace the doctrine of growth with one of sustainability in time to save ourselves, and time is running out.

ISRAELI BOYCOTT JUSTIFIABLE

In a move which calls to question the NDP's commitment to enlightened government, Bob Rae has sacked the director of the Ontario Science Centre for agreeing to boycott Israeli products as part of a deal with an Arab nation. The dismissal followed intensely vitriolic attacks on the director in all Toronto press.

There is as good reason to boycott goods from Israel as those of South Africa. Both are rightwing dictorships which systematically murder citizens who belong to the "wrong" ethnic groups. Israel's vicious occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza strip and attacks on Palestinians should be enough to warrant a boycott; Israel's alliance with South Africa is fuel to the fire. Since 1976, Israel and South Africa have made no secret of their alliance. From Israel, South Africa gets advanced engineering, including military technology unobtainable anywhere else due to sanctions and embargos; from South Africa, Israel receives strategic raw materials and capital for a variety of purposes. This situation has enabled the USA to pay lip service to an embargo of strategic goods to South Africa, while in fact sending it (and other rightwing dictatorships) the goods via Israel.

Like previous Ontario governments, the NDP seems more interested in placating rightwing groups (in this case, the press and the Zionist lobby) than in furthering social justice.

Mohawk Defense Fund Update

The Defense Fund for Mohawk Sovereignty is a fund set up July 12 1990 to provide material aid the Mohawk Nation during the siege at Kanesetake and Kahnawake. With the siege lifted, money is now needed to help with massive legal costs faced by the Nation as a result of the hundreds of charges laid against Mohawks.

The fund has collected approximately $13,000 so far, which has gone to the following uses: $6,600 to the Defense Fund for the Mohawk Nation (Mohawk Nation Office); $2,400 to the Liberation for the Mohawk Nation Defense Fund (an overall Mohawk fund); $3,100 to the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee (on the advice of the Mohawk Nation Office—used for phone/fax bills during the summer crisis, to get information to supporters overseas and around the world); and $900 to the Native Women's Resource Centre for their food drive.

Funds are still sorely needed. Don't let the summer's events be forgotten. Send donations to the Defense Fund for Mohawk Sovereignty, Acct. #2638, c/o Bread & Roses Credit Union, 348 Danforth Ave., Suite 211, Toronto Ontario, M4K 1N8, Canada. For more info call (416) 921-0437

Ecomedia Toronto

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